

# FUTURE OF WOMEN IN TECH

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**“Women leaders are the most untapped competitive edge for the future global world.”**

Australian Computer Society

**international**  
CONNECTOR



# INTRODUCTION

When you ask professionals about equal representation in the workplace, the majority will agree that this is an important issue. The problem is that there are many societal barriers in place that prevent women from having this equal representation. There are multitudes of opportunities growing in the United States and Australia, for example, that indicate a huge need for skilled workers in technology.

Yet, speaking directly to professional women in tech, we heard unbelievable and disheartening (though sometimes hilarious) conversations:

“I was the Engineer in the room, yet the Sales Director mansplained to me how my product worked because a ‘woman wouldn’t understand the technical aspects’ - with the addition of ‘sweetheart’ as emphasis.”

“After a long elaborate introduction of my husband and his credentials by a male associate, I was introduced to the investor as ‘the wife.’ Did I fail to mention that I was the Founder and CEO of the company of interest?”

Does this really still happen today?

The simple answer is yes, we are still far from achieving gender equality within the workplace. Recent research reported by *ABC News Australia* has shown that only 16% of CEOs/Heads of Business in Australia are women. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the data shows that women are just as significantly under-represented in the US, for women hold only 15% of board seats and leadership roles. In

addition, reported by Dreamhost - State of Women In Tech, only 12% of engineers at Silicon Valley startups are women. Only 11% of executive positions at Silicon Valley companies are held by women.

This situation is not unique to large organizations. According to Women Business Owner Statistics by NAWBO, there are more than 11 million businesses owned by women, but they receive only 6.7% of venture capital funding. Even with a nearly identical pitch, State of Women In Tech by Dreamhost reported that men were consistently chosen over women to receive funding.

In addition, this problem persists outside the tech industry and is found across sectors. As summed up by Claire Johnson, Lendlease, “It is a broader question, it isn’t just the tech companies. Every company really is needing to utilize and incorporate tech into it. And how do we gain more women?”

She further spurred the discussion: “Is it that they are dropping out in terms of making choices to have a family and that takes them out? Is it an onboarding challenge? Where are we losing them? Is it getting them back into the jobs after they’ve had a family or made other career choices for a while and then want to come back? Is it too hard to jump back in?”

Improvements in technology are powering modern economies, and overcoming workplace gender inequity impacts everyone. We launched this program to learn how we can create a more



diverse and equitable future. We know it’s not because of a lack of interest in the problem, but as with most systemic challenges, there are many intersected layers to examine. Just addressing one sole element will not solve this issue. Awareness has not led to substantial changes. With technology as our tool, we intend to seek out solutions.

“Technology is now changing how we work and we can now work to normalize these changes.”  
Susannah Torpey, Winston & Strawn

**“Improving female participation in work across the OECD could boost OECD GDP by US\$6 trillion, while closing the gender pay gap could boost GDP by US\$2 trillion.”**  
PWC

## Australia

Demand for technology workers  
**+100,000** 2018 to 2024

Digital technologies powered by mobile  
**\$65b** by 2023

Smart city solutions for low congestion  
**\$10b** by 2023

Exports **\$3.78b** in 2017-18

Imports **\$3.27b** in 2017-18

Women in tech representation increased slightly (to **29%** from 25%)

Underrepresentation of senior professionals  
**12%** in tech versus industry average of **16%**

Domestic IT enrollments are up **50%** since the late 2000s, but completion rates lower

Pay gap has decreased slightly by **2%** (**18%**)

ACS report

## USA

Technology workers demand 2020 - some 2020 guide highlights include:

**\$1.9 trillion** direct economic output of the tech industry, representing 10% of the national economy

New tech jobs: **307,000** in 2019

Tech businesses: **557,000** in 2019

Tech startups launched: 13,400 in 2019

Economic impact of the tech industry: **\$1.9 billion**

Exports: **\$338 billion** in 2019

During the decade, 2010-2019, U.S. exports of technology goods and services increased by approximately **\$104 billion** in value in current dollars, translating to 44 percent growth.

IMPORT: **\$500 billion** in technology goods and services from overseas sellers in 2018, resulting in a tech trade deficit of slightly over **\$160 billion**. (CompTia - Tech Trade Snapshot)

Women in tech representation:  
**26%** representation in computing jobs (steady decline for years)

Underrepresentation of women as senior professionals

**5%** of leadership positions in the tech sector;

**9%** of partners at the top 100 venture capital firms. (Dreamhost - State of Women In Tech)

Underrepresentation in job applicant pool **16%** are women

Pay gap = **81 cents** to the dollar for uncontrolled and **98 cents** to the dollar for controlled (PayScale - The State of the Gender Pay Gap)



**“An important aspect to consider in order to erase the gender inequality bias would be to start having these conversations more vocally and more abundantly. I think it is about time people started having more of these conversations openly. Getting to the heart of where the unfortunate culture that has been passed on consciously and even worse, unconsciously, throughout generations is a step in the right direction. Then we can begin to unclog the inequality promoting narratives and start the right ones.”**

Mel, Kenya, IC Young Innovator

## BACKGROUND

Future of Women in Tech is a growing global collaborative forum with the mission to co-create best practices for supporting women at different critical stages of their career, and to explore how female leadership will play a virtual role in shaping the future of tech. The program was developed as an initiative by International Connector in partnership with the Australian American Chamber of Commerce, San Francisco.

Our initial goal was to create a mentorship pipeline between young women in Australia and Australian women working in tech in San Francisco. For over a year, we

interviewed women across Australia and the United States about their experiences in the workplace, focusing on tech professionals. It was clear that the talent pipeline was not the only area that needed our attention, and thus the format of our program developed.

Inspired by our conversations and spurred by dismal data on women working in tech, we started by putting the design of the future in the hands of women, initially across Australia and Silicon Valley, to co-create best practices. Uniquely, our multi-city forum is interactive and action-oriented. Every participant contributes

ideas from her experience to create collaborative best practices for changing workplace norms. The forum addresses how to support and enhance workplace diversity and inclusion, and how to develop a strong workforce of talented women for technology industries.

Through these interactive and action-oriented crowdsourcing forums, we gathered a wealth of practical solutions for businesses to implement today.

### Reading notes:

This report is far from complete - as it should be. It's an evolving, ever-growing conversation and a living breathing forum of information. The world shifts dramatically every day and we have created a forum to continue these conversations and deliver information back to reflect the world at each new stage.

The writing in this report reflects many direct quotes from speakers, participants, organizations, and students. As we compiled the key points and information, we sometimes felt it was better to read direct quotes back to back than to artificially craft stories around them, particularly when the quotes deliver the message. Due to the fact that all of the quotes were taken from dialogue and conversation, some were lightly edited for clarity.

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# METHODOLOGY

The Future of Women in Tech utilizes a human-centric methodology that allows forum participants to answer questions and contribute new ideas in real time. We crowdsourced, co-created and exchanged ideas in an immersive and interactive format.

**4 Elements of our Design Methodology:**

1) Ecosystem of Collaborative Partnerships: We have reached out to many women and men across different cities, regions, and industries. Effective solutions are multifaceted and require the ongoing support of numerous cooperating organizations to enact lasting change.

2) Community Participatory Model: Our events, both virtual and in-person, are interactive. Everyone who attends is part of the process because the best ideas come from conversations, not speeches.

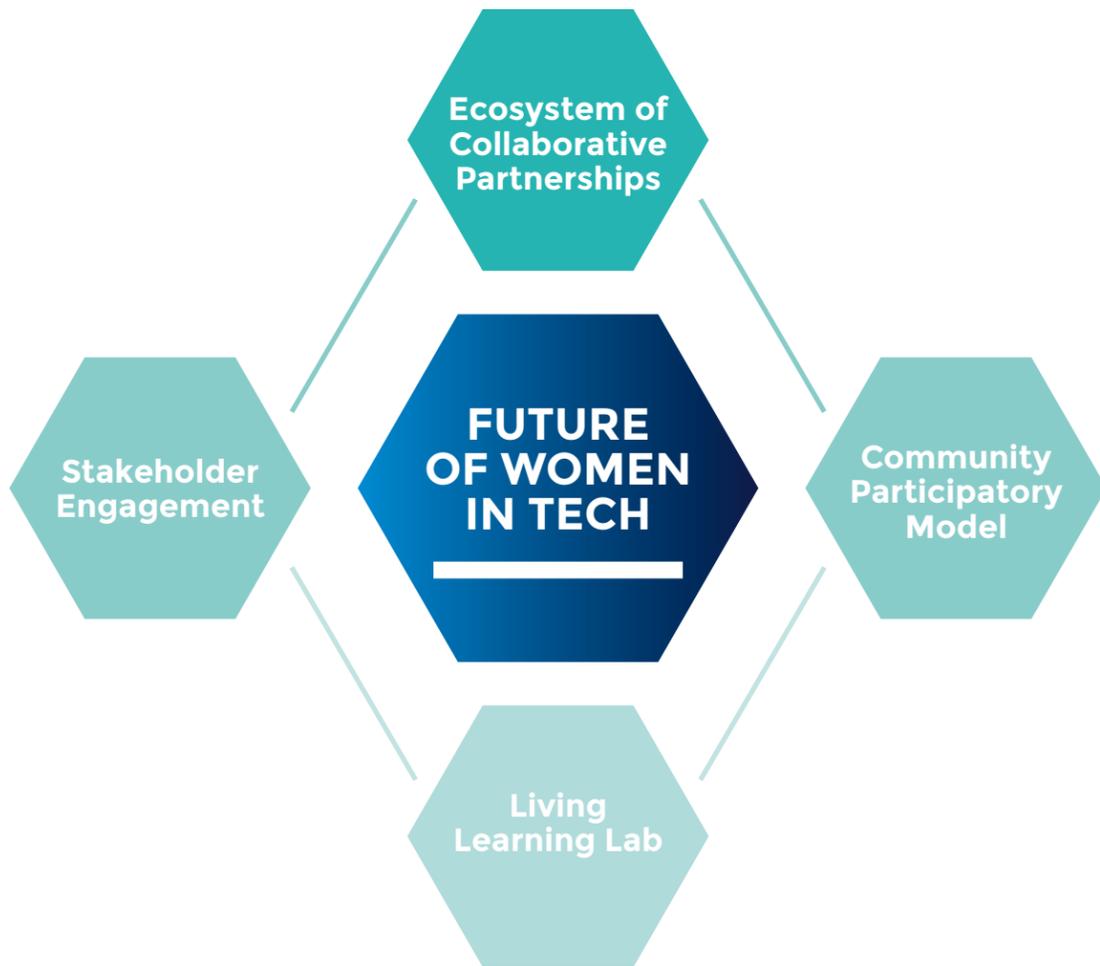
3) Living Learning Lab: As we develop new ideas, we share the results with others to pilot, test and tweak for the real world. We are constantly learning through active development.

4) Stakeholder Engagement: We circle back to everyone who has been involved in past events to bring them new ideas, perspectives, expertise, and questions. We see this program as a growing global forum that expands the conversation.

**Benefits of Methodology:**

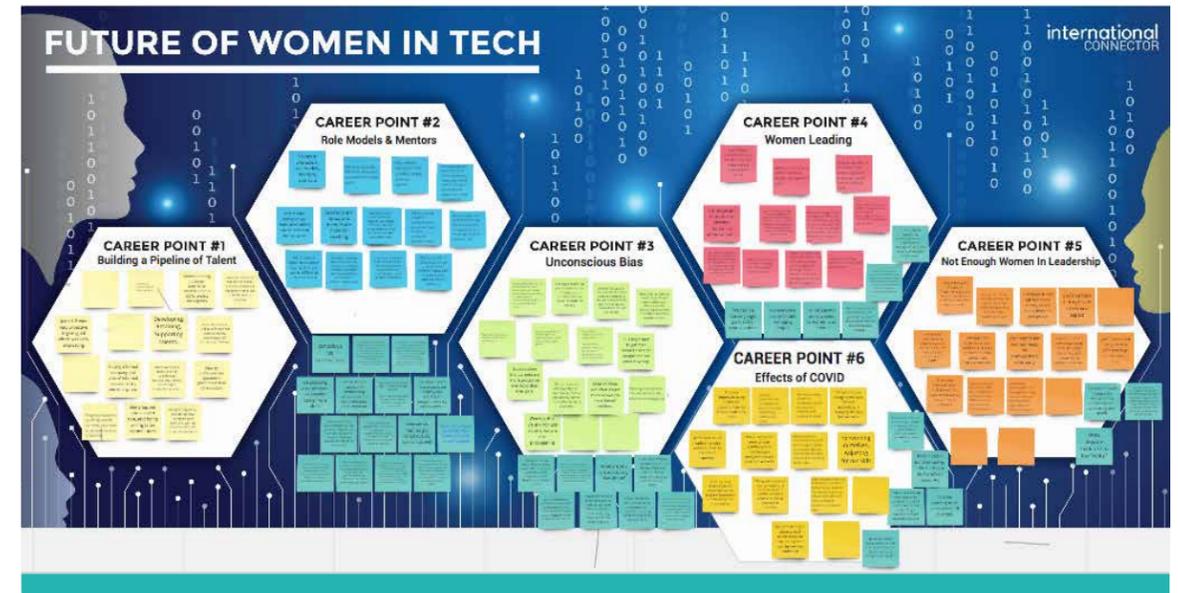
Our research is living, breathing, and ever-developing. The world keeps changing overnight, and in order to respond, we need to continue to expand and grow with it. The benefits of this method include:

- Increased audience participation
- Ability to learn and grow upon the data as the world shifts and changes
- Ability to identify local attributes and global trends
- Ownership and investment by participants
- Participants, not just speakers, can contribute their ideas
- Forums provide space for all types of thinkers/learners to express themselves through writing, speaking or visuals.



**Whiteboarding Tool**

A designed whiteboard supports our interactivity and tracks our growing ideas. We use this tool as a form of engagement, documentation, and analysis. Whether the event is online or in-person, we utilize this tool to track conversations, ideas, and interactions.



# EVENTS



## Launching in Australia - November 2019

Over 350 women and men participated in 4 interactive events to co-design and share best practices for advancing women in technological fields. The goal was to drive stronger diversity and inclusion strategies in business today. Participants in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane engaged in dialogue sparked by trailblazing speakers from Qantas, Accenture, Viasat, Google, Jetstar, MCEC and more. The program was developed and designed by International Connector and the Australian American Chamber of Commerce, San Francisco.

### UTS - Student-Focused

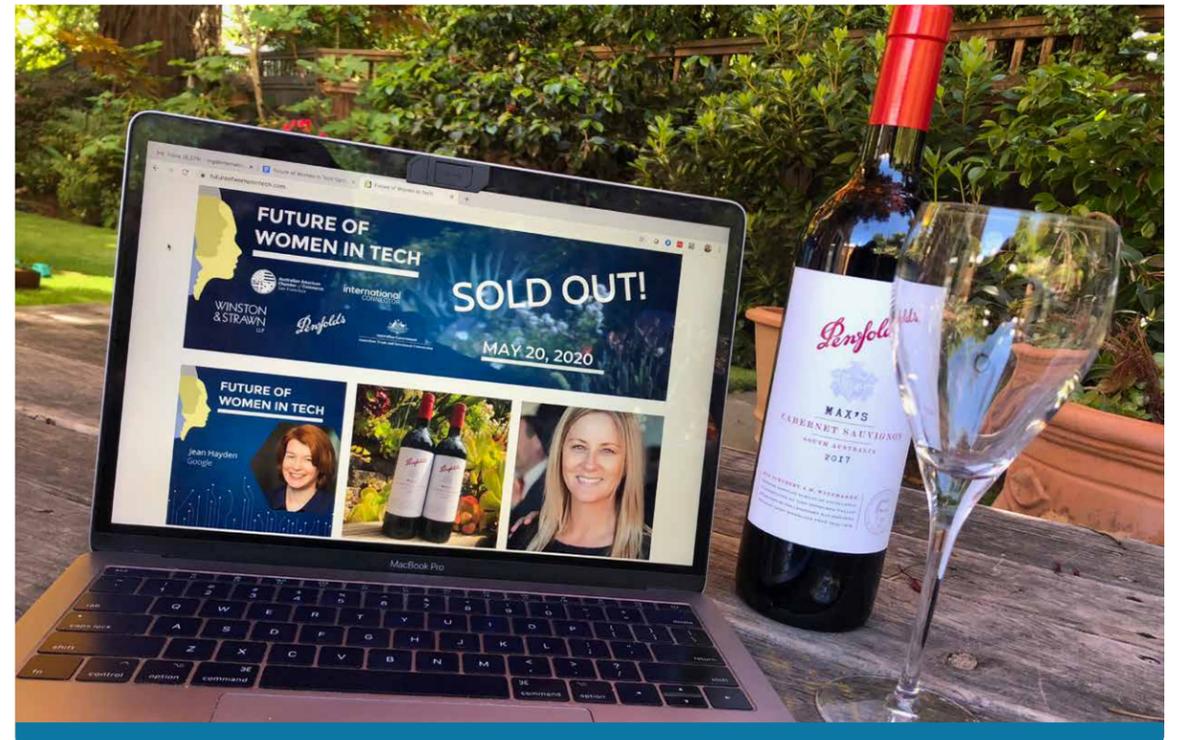
We engaged a group of students at The University of Technology Sydney. Our event featured a panel of four trailblazers who presented their experiences in the workplace and potential solutions. One great solution from this event was a policy piloted in the engineering department that ended the practice of scheduling core meetings before 10 am or after 3 pm. Jeri Childers, UTS faculty reported that "This meeting policy was piloted by the UTS Faculty of Engineering and IT and it is working!" When asked if they had a mentor, the majority of students did not but would like to. There were mentorship programs in the school but a common problem was understanding what role mentors can play in a student's life.

### Online Study

For years International Connector has recruited young talent from across the globe to gain professional opportunities while building critical skills in remote working, critical thinking and cultural understanding. We invited members of this diverse and talented group to co-create and debate their vision for the Future of Women in Tech. Participants came from a variety of countries, including New Zealand, Australia, France, Tanzania, Kenya, United States, Ukraine, Nigeria, Turkey, Pakistan and more.

### Virtual San Francisco Event

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, we pivoted and held our San Francisco event virtually and there were 80 participants. We continued to utilize our whiteboard tool to document the interactions and suggestions from audience members and speaker presentations. San Francisco is seen as a symbol worldwide of the technology industry and there are many shining achievements in gender equality here. Despite being this symbol, according to Dreamhost - State of Women in Tech, "Only 12% of engineers at Silicon Valley startups are women. Only 11% of executive positions at Silicon Valley companies are held by women."



## THE TOPICS

After speaking to more than 50 women leaders, we started to hear many similar themes from which we developed our starting point. We chose to focus on five critical points that present barriers to women during the span of their careers. In each forum, our speakers and audience contributed ideas to move the needle on implementable solutions.

**“Every company in every industry today is being impacted by tech. I don’t think you can do anything without a technological solution involved in some way.”**

**Marti Grimminck,**  
International Connector



### Our Topics

#### **Building Pipeline of Talent**

Where is the talent being developed, supported and retained?

#### **Role Models & Mentors**

How can we build stronger systems of women and men in these roles?

#### **Unconscious Bias**

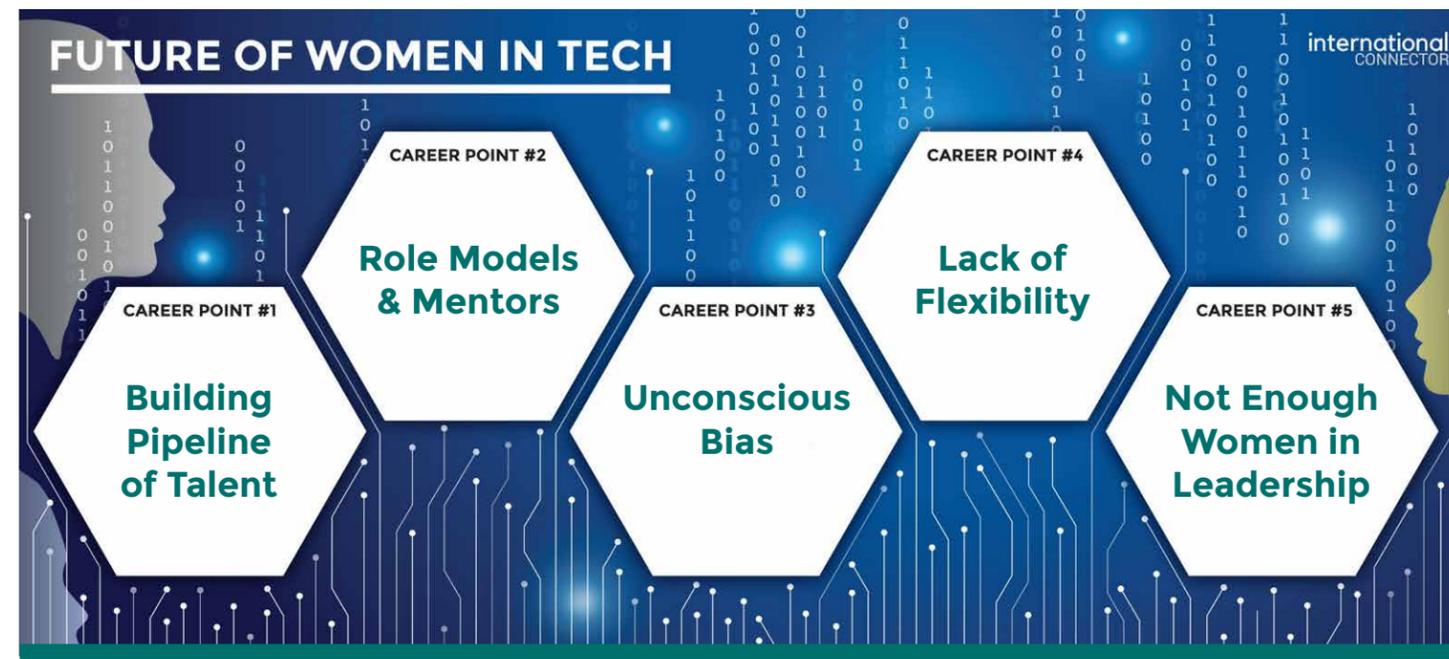
How can we erase the bias that causes pay gaps, lower-level roles and general day-to-day leadership challenges?

#### **Lack of Flexibility**

What does flexibility really mean and how can we build programs with true flexibility?

#### **Not Enough Women in Leadership**

How do we get women appointed and how can we shift the culture in the meantime?



# #1 BUILDING A PIPELINE OF TALENT

**“With the rapid rate of technology and industry changes, attracting, developing and reskilling talent is critical for our success now and in the future.”**

Karen Gee, Melbourne,  
Strategic Technology Leader

A career doesn't just happen – it is built on years of schooling, specialized study, qualifying degrees, technical knowledge, entry-level experience, and more. One of the most common metaphors for the process of career development is the talent pipeline. For women in technology, that pipeline is leaking. According to a Microsoft study in the US, “The research has indicated that there are ‘off ramps’ at different educational levels where girls leave STEM programs throughout middle school, high school and undergrad college.” At each transition and advancement, fewer women pursue degrees and careers in technology, and by the end, they make up only 11% of Silicon Valley executives, as reported by Dreamhost - State of Women in Tech. Future of Women in Tech began as a pipeline-building program. Empowering women to progress in their chosen career paths means that we have to understand the weaknesses in the current pipeline so that our best practices can address them.

## Girls Comprise

**56%** of all Advanced Placement (AP) test-takers

**46%** of all AP Calculus test-takers

**But only...**

**19%** of all AP Computer Science test-takers

## Women Earn

**57%** of all undergraduate degrees

**42%** of all undergraduate math and statistics degrees

**40%** of all undergraduate physical sciences degrees

**But only...**

**18%** of all undergraduate computer information sciences degrees (National Center for Women Information Technology)

## SOLUTIONS FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS

### Lead with the problem, not the technology

“I think most women and girls want to hear what problem do you want to solve? That’s a lot more exciting than, say, learn how to code. So what is the problem you want to solve? And then we figure out the technology, whether there is technology. What kind of business we need to get around. And I think that will drive us to having that purpose and the problems that we want to solve and start that question earlier rather than a STEM program.”

### Nurture Talent

“I think that talent is developed everywhere. When a young girl is interested in technology, it is her family and her teachers that should help her to develop her talent. Also, there could be technological lessons or teams especially for girls in order to boost their confidence.”

Women also need to believe they are more than capable.”  
IC Young Innovator

### Understand Social Biases

“I was blocked in my career trying to create a startup when an investor said that being a woman was a hindrance, though one he could work around.”

**“I think ‘discouraging from applying for a job based on your gender’ needs to be broken out between consciously and unconsciously... I have never been discouraged explicitly, but I wonder if there are subconscious elements that exist under the surface.”**

Jane Polak Scowcroft, Mozilla



**“I think that the biggest challenge is to develop women engagement in developing countries and this issue is the one that the UN Women and global community should focus on the most. I strongly believe that education both formal and informal, empowerment and development are the key solutions.”**

Anna, Ukraine, IC Young Innovator



#### **Develop Your Own Pipelines**

“You’re actually gauging and working with talent until you’re ready to hire and having that pipeline you’re already there. You’re not waiting till last minute where you have to fill roles and then you’re drastically looking for someone and taking someone qualified, somebody else. And also then how are you actually developing that talent? Mentoring to retain your talent? Engaging feedback loop with your employees?”

“We work with these interns sometimes for every year of their college degrees... And they’re doing real work.”  
Jaimie Hogan, Viasat

#### **Demand Equity in Application Pools**

Claudine Ogilvy from Jetstar had to go out to market three times in order to get the 50/50 representation for a job that they were offering. “I sent back the applicants 3 times before I received an equitable gender split.”

As tech leaders and recruiters, we have to really think about what it is we value beyond just this four-year university degree and coding in this job experience.

The data from Male Champions of Change STEM shows that while women and men enter STEM with high levels of motivation to solve complex problems facing the world, women are more likely than men to consider leaving STEM. Women in STEM experience significantly more barriers to advancement than men and unacceptably high levels of everyday sexism, pointing to a culture in STEM that excludes women, minimizes their contributions and devalues their voices.

#### **Be Proactive Yourself**

“I interviewed with the company before they even had a position. And they let me know right up front that there’s no position right now, but that they are really interested in my background. They wanted to meet with me. They couldn’t hire me until they got this one contract.”  
Jaimie Hogan, Viasat

#### **Aging Workforce Training**

“For retention, particularly focus on the aging workforce to retain women in tech given the increasing volume of aged workers and the many initiatives that already exist for the younger generation.”  
Karen Gee

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Male Champions of Change STEM has released the **Harnessing Our Innovation Potential** report. The report shares new research conducted by Accenture, surveying over 3000 women and men working in Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths (STEM) careers in Australia.

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## #2 ROLE MODELS & MENTORS

In a field where there are too few women, creating and preserving a pipeline of talent means we must ensure that there are other women to look up to. At the end of the pipeline, at the highest levels of a career, are role models--the women that inspire others to pursue their careers. However, there are two big questions that emerge:

### What do we seek in role models?

"There are relatively few models / paradigms of 'successful career women' so we tend to be pigeonholed into the stigma that the person we're interacting with has," wrote Jane Polak Scowcroft, Mozilla

### How do we utilize role models?

The most critical time in a career path of women is stepping into middle-management, a time when they need strong mentors to support further growth and/or advancement. Instead, there seems to be a lack of attention or programs to support this state of a woman's career, a time that often coincides with starting a family, forcing many women to make hard decisions about taking a maternity break or pursuing other career options.

## Mentorship vs Sponsorship vs Championship

Across the board there is consistent consensus that a mentor is important for progression. However, it is far from the only thing. Janine Griffiths, Accenture, brought to focus the distinction between a Mentor, a Sponsor, and a Champion:

### Mentorship

A mentor supports and encourages the professional development of the employee and provides active guidance to help achieve goals. ([mentor.us](http://mentor.us))

### Sponsorship

A workplace sponsor is traditionally someone in a company who is able to guide and influence your progress through the maze and politics of advancement. ([thebalancecareers.com](http://thebalancecareers.com))

### Champion

A person who will promote and speak on behalf of someone else, usually in terms of promotion or advancement in the workplace.

### Finding the right mentor, sponsor, and ultimately, champion is important.

"Mentorship with sponsorship is actually a really active role. Someone senior that takes on to make sure you progress, right? So by the very definition, a sponsor has to be someone more senior in your organization who can actually help me with that career. Mentorship can happen laterally to friends, people that are in the companies, coaches and people like that."

### Another angle to this was introduced.

Not everyone has the full scope of skills and experience needed for a mentor. Rather, "Board of Directors" is a group of people that provide a variety of perspectives for your professional career and your personal life.

## SOLUTIONS FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS

### Pair Generations Together in Mentorship

“It’s the most standard solution in the world: You’ve just got to get mentors to pair with the young talent. It is a total savior, because it prevents the isolation setting in, allows them to start mapping their career paths and insulates them from some of the worst repercussions of the macho behaviors.”

“Young girls need more strong female role models that they can relate themselves to. Because most women all around the world are subjected at some point to sexism while they are growing up, society makes them believe that they are not good enough. If more women come forward to inspire other women that they can do anything that they set their mind to, it would be a great impact both on an individual and on perception of the society”

Sena, Turkey, IC Young Innovator

“Strong and inspirational women should mentor and share their experience with female mentees.”

IC Young Innovator

### Create Pipelines of Mentors

“Stronger mentorship training, focusing on mentees (early in careers) to be the next mentors (leaders).”

### Use Technology to Connect to Mentors

“If you have only a few senior women, use some of your men. And use technology. Cisco is using telepresence technology to do virtual mentoring sessions across the world, linking young women in India with senior women in San Jose.”

### Diverse Role Models

“I am an immigrant [of Australia]. I was taught to speak softly. Sometimes it’s wonderful to have a wide variety of diverse leaders from different cultural backgrounds because in every culture, the communication is different.”

### Build Strong Peer Relationships

“Part of the main process comes up over and over again, and it’s not just within one company, which is important, but it’s also building the peer relationships at different levels of people’s careers.”

“Strengthening the tribe of amazing and strong women who can lift up the others around them and create more ripple effect to inspire other women.”

IC Young Innovator

### Utilize the power of storytelling

“We need to let the younger generation have role models worthy of emulation. However, unless their story is put out there, we can’t really inspire them.”

IC Young Innovator

### The Role of Men

“Male leaders/employees should facilitate the women’s growth initiative.”

“You need men as mentors, sponsors and champions.”

“Men who have a great relationship with women in the workplace are more likely to hire or promote them.”

Broaden our perspective of what a female role model should be:

**“When I catch myself being rude or dismissive or kind of hard charging and interrupting people, I cut myself some slack cause I think there is a wide range of characteristics you can be as a successful woman in tech. And so it was really interesting to see someone with a really different template.”**

Jean Hayden, Google



# WOMEN OF COLOR

At our Brisbane forum, we watched an incredible presentation on inequality led by Pauline Fetauli from River City Labs. Fetauli led herself and Marti Grimminck from International Connector, through an interactive exercise where each time she mentioned an inequality that either one had experienced, that person would have to take a step forward. Below are the categories that Fetauli read scenarios from:

- GENDER
- ETHNICITY
- DISABILITY
- RELIGION
- RACE
- AGE

At the end of it, Fetauli was further ahead of Grimminck. Although we all face setbacks, as a woman of color, Fetauli has had that much further to push. In the movement to ensure equality for women in STEM fields, that nuance often goes underappreciated. Though some estimates put women at 28% of the STEM workforce in America, women of color only account for 5% of that, according to Maryville Univeristy, Women of Color in STEM report.

## Black Lives Matter - Racial inequalities need to end.

In Australia, the majority of senior leaders of organizations are overwhelmingly of Anglo-Saxton descent, according to data collected from The Australian Human Rights Commission.

Yet, in October 2019, *The Australian* wrote that there was “diversity fatigue” in attitudes toward gender equality. As quoted by Founder of The Dream Collective Sarah Lui, “This is the invisible barrier to real change. People are thinking more about what they think they need to say, a focus on being politically correct, rather than focusing on inserting themselves into the issue and understanding that every single one of us has a responsibility to re-evaluate how we can be more inclusive.”

## Cultural Backgrounds of Senior Leaders in Australian Organisations (Chief Executives and Other ‘C-Suite’ Leaders)

Cultural background	Number	Percentage of senior leaders	Percentage of Australian population	Percentage over/under representations (+/-)
Anglo-Celtic	1890	75.9	58	+17.9
European	474	19.0	18	+1.0
Non-European	116	4.7	21	-16.3
Indigenous	10	0.4	3	-2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2490</b>			



**“This topic is essential because supporting diversity and inclusion is the right thing to do. We need to start talking about what changes need to be made today to create a positive future for the industry.”**

Sarah-Jane Peterschlingmann, ATech

## #3 UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

**“I have been in the workforce for 30 plus years and we have passed a generation. To me, the struggle is to understand why gender bias still persists because many women on this forum are mothers, and what are we teaching our sons as to what is equality? How do these biases persist?”**

Jackie Yuen, Australian American Chamber of Commerce, San Francisco



Let's go through some key data referenced in the forums:

According to Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, men and women with identical resumes are not talked about in the same way. Men are deemed more competent and worth hiring, while women are seen as more likable.

*Forbes* reported that male researchers who file grant applications are 1.4 times more likely to get them than women.

In the 1970s, orchestras were only 5% women. When they started doing blind auditions behind a curtain and judging based on the quality of the music. It turns out that this method led to five times more women being in orchestras, according to The National Bureau of Economic Research, *Orchestrating Impartially* Report.

Finally, *Busykid.com* reported that sons are paid twice as much allowance as daughters.

In every forum, unconscious bias is a hot topic among our participants - men and women alike. We recognize that it's there, but we are unable to truly move past it. In fact, it has been shaping so much about women in business today, especially the male-dominated field of technology. What really strikes us is the casualness of how it emerges. Women are categorized as being 'people managers' or considered not truly up for the technical roles.

When it happens, women are either passed over for the opportunity or become too frustrated to stay in the industry. Furthermore, women find themselves under unfair expectations. Over and over, we hear women discuss how much pressure they are under to be 150% and perfect in their roles. If they cannot live up to these expectations, they are perceived to have failed or be less competent in their work than their male counterparts.

Research profiled in this report shows that people judge women to be less competent than men in "male" jobs unless they are clearly successful in their work.

**“Clearly, the unconscious bias that women don't belong in senior level positions plays a big role. It's imperative that organizations change the way they make hiring and promotion decisions and ensure that eligible women are given serious consideration.”**

as reported by *Harvard Business Review*, 'Women Score Higher Than Men in Most Leadership Skills'

## KEY SOLUTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

### Our role as women

“I think just even owning that we’re not just victims, but we’re propagating unconscious bias. We need to have an active role to improve it.”

### Understanding, recognizing and taking action...early

“Understanding the unconscious and overcoming unconscious bias early, and then really saying, well, how do we get women into roles early and then give them a trajectory?”

Claire Johnson, Lendlease

### Education

“I think that the pillar on which gender equality can be based is education. It takes time to change the mindset of people, but only an educational system that supports gender equality can erase all the bias.”

IC Young Innovator

### Government

“There should also be government bodies to which women could report pay gaps and mistreatment in the workplace. I don’t know what is the case in other countries, but in Greece there are not such government bodies that support women.”

IC Young Innovator

### Maternity AND paternity leave

“Aside from the glass ceiling, the reason that most companies don’t hire women is that they may be looking for maternity leave since in most countries, companies have a legal obligation to provide it. For that matter I really believe that men should also have legal rights to maternity leave both for reducing inequality in the both the workplace and social environment.”

IC Young Innovator

### Blind recruitment

“Blind recruitment rule: The hiring manager is not allowed to know name and gender info. This helps with many diversity issues.”

IC Young Innovator

### Constructive dialogue

“In my opinion, constructive dialogue between each other and collaboration for solutions can help us to get rid of stereotypes and unconscious bias. It is important not only to listen to each other but also to hear each other.”

Anna, Ukraine, IC Young Innovator

### Men need to be involved

“Ask men to get involved. I think the best thing I’ve been able to do is to talk to men about other men.”

“Male allies, male mentors, males who are pulling you up and kind of tapping you on the shoulder. even having people who put your hand up and say, ‘Hey, you’re ready for this,’ are really important in your life.”

### Recognize soft sexism in the workplace

“Soft sexism. Realize it in the workplace. Do your part to promote women in the organization. Go above and beyond. We have to realize that we even have our own unconscious bias and unconscious assumptions around the women on your team.”

### More female entrepreneurs

“Forget the large corporations. Create your own leadership pathway.”

IC Young Innovator

### Is it a disadvantage to have children?

“Long story short, I didn’t get the job. Maybe the person they did give the job to (who had six years less experience than me and was a single man) was actually more qualified. But I don’t think this was a gender thing, I think this was just literally his unconscious bias toward a mom and a person who was going to be giving birth to a new child and dealing with maternity leave and all things that come around having new kids.”

Technology tools can help us understand our biases:

**“Our research shows that everyone has unconscious bias...there are actually quite a few technical tools in which you can go and find your biases. Now the world knows that you can go and really understand your biases because the first thing about changing them is awareness.”**

Anna Buber-Farovich, Google

# WHY ARE WOMEN CALLED ABRASIVE AND RUDE?



**“I have definitely been called rude – maybe it’s a badge of honor?”**

**“As someone who has been called a bitch in court, I consider it a badge indeed.”**

Susannah Torpey, Winston & Strawn

At Future of Women in Tech, we wear the badge proudly.

Strong women leaders are often called too abrasive, too rude, too ambitious. We are even called this by other women leaders. If we heard comments like this in isolation, we would naturally attribute it to a certain leadership style or personality trait. In all of our forums, we repeatedly hear from women how they were described by their colleagues.

**“I feel like if anybody commented on a man’s demeanor or feelings or how someone may have felt when he said that, it would be like some sort of awkward conversation...”**

Amanda Richardson, CoderPad

“There are different expectations placed on us as women than men. Men are acquainted with being strong and assertive, and women are supposed to have this softer side. And I think I do [have a softer side], but I don’t think I always have to show that to be a strong leader as a woman.”

**How to respond when called abrasive, rude, etc.**

“I would thank them for the feedback and say ‘for me to learn and grow I need specific feedback of when and where I exhibit this behavior. Please tell me specifically what I said or say which exhibits this behavior.’”

**“Maybe we’re more direct because we need to be more efficient with our time – kids, dog poop, and all the other things.”**

Lindsay Scalisi, Access Brand Communications

## BE YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF

**“When you compromise who you are, you deprive yourself and your team of the wondrous beauty, wisdom, and nurturing instinct that is uniquely woman.”**

Liz McMillan, Dictionary.com

McKinsey’s research has shown that diversity can help organizations increase innovation, reconsider entrenched ways of thinking, and improve financial performance. Organizations can take full advantage of the perspectives of a diverse workforce only if leaders and employees employ a sense of inclusion, which we define as the degree to which an individual feels that their authentic selves are welcomed at work, enabling them to contribute in a meaningful and deliberate manner.

When Liz McMillan first entered Dictionary.com as CEO, she was simultaneously going through a divorce. Right at the critical crises, she had just moved out, but she had to present in front of the entire company - and gave the presentation holding her kid on her hip because she had no other option for care.

Through this event, people got to see her vulnerability and that created a culture within the company where coworkers could feel as though they were able to be honest when needing to take personal things. As Liz summed up, “When it comes to work life balance, I believe that it isn’t work vs life, but rather work and life constantly intermixing and balancing together.”

“Perhaps the fundamental component to ensure the above would be to teach people from young ages about aspects of vulnerability, true strength, courage, confidence, principality, virtue, kindness, endurance, patience etc. and support keenly the personal development of people from tender ages advocating openly for appreciation of diversity. Truly starting to pay attention to such aspects of life would create a proper spectrum of well-developed individuals who can pass on good emotional health to others and society will be in a good place.”

Mel, Kenya, IC Young Innovator



**“Kids in Zoom build empathy. I think it might be my power move. Ha!”**

Amanda Richardson, Coderpad





## #4 LACK OF FLEXIBILITY

When we first started talking about lack of flexibility in the workplace, we were in a pre-Covid-19 world. Most of our context was looking at flexibility in careers paths as well as flexibility to handle your life. This topic has led to particularly potent conversations for parents or for those managing elderly parents. In fact, in our forums, the men were just as vocal about the need for flexibility as the women.

Now, with a global shutdown and remote working environment, we have seen flexibility through a new lens. Does this change the structure and attitudes toward flexibility? “We’re all working from home, and I know a lot of people are juggling dogs, cats, kids, partners, whatever.”  
Lindsay Scalisi, Access Brand Communications

Flexibility actually opens up the possibilities for diverse talent to join your organization. There are more benefits from rethinking your structure for employees, as Karen Gee listed: “Career transitions - returnships (mothers coming back to work), flexibility working arrangements, reskilling (transitions between roles, organizations and from other industries), leverage skills & experiences with transferable skills.”

When we speak specifically to our younger participants, they see flexibility through a lens of control: “Flexibility means that you can control when, where and how you do your job.” One of our IC Young Innovators went further to explain, “Flexibility is about adjusting the work structure and environment to the current generation and its needs.”

### KEY SOLUTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

#### Offer part-time roles or job shares

Many organizations are starting to offer roles to share or part-time jobs. Qantas was just releasing technical roles in a part-time capacity to specifically target women and offer the flexibility they need.

#### Understanding the Future of Work

“We can build programs with true flexibility through properly understanding the dynamics of the future of work. What do we want to make easier, what can be made less rigid and how. When we truly understand the direction the world is taking in regard to work and technology then we can build proper systems that can live up to the standards of an evolving world.”  
Mel, Kenya, IC Young Innovator

#### Life-Friendly Meeting Times

“A simple way to start is to hold meetings between 10am and 2pm.”

#### Walk the talk - be a role model

“It needs more than just a statement to say you can be flexible because you do need role models doing it so that you can say how it can be done. You also sometimes make the organization put the guardrails, the policies, whatever you want to call it. And I’m not sure how many people here from UTS, but I did hear a story about someone in the School

of Engineering, which I can imagine is an exceedingly male-dominated part of the university, putting a rule in place around no important meetings outside of core hours. A) not long before 10am and nothing after 3pm, which I think probably constrains the time that meetings are held, which I think everyone would be really excited for. And B) it means that different people can take different flexible options. It actually enables more people to feel like they are participating more effectively. Just because you don’t see it being done in your organization doesn’t mean it cannot be done. And as soon as you put something on the table and you ask and it’s helpful to have that sponsor who’s going to put the pan into the fire for you if you go and ask someone and they’re willing to help you get it done. And it can happen.”

Sarah Kruger, Accenture

#### Non-rigid culture

“I would say perhaps that flexibility would entail embracing structures that foster an environment that is opposite of a rigid culture. For example, having people work anywhere, not confining them to office spaces, or having virtual meetings, or having manageable work schedules and hours for new mothers. In my view, that is flexibility.”

Mel, Kenya, IC Young Innovator

## #5 NOT ENOUGH WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The most important question to answer is why - why do fewer and fewer women pursue technology careers at each step along the pipeline? The best answer sociologists have is the phenomenon of stereotype threat. Put simply, there are a variety of stereotypes about women, technology, and professional trajectories - that women aren't as good with numbers or computers as men, that they're better with people or relationships, that they aren't good leaders, that they can't handle stress well, and so on. When put in environments that emphasize their minority status in light of those stereotypes - say, in a physics PhD classroom with only male peers or a tech office overwhelmingly filled with men - women experience stereotype threat. Studies show a variety of negative effects, including decreased performance and a loss of the feeling of belonging, which are replicated with any group for whom there is a negative stereotype, including racial minorities.

The pipeline begins leaking early: even though more women than men go to college, fewer girls take high school STEM AP tests and only about 20% of STEM college majors are women. Some researchers even find evidence that the gap begins in middle school. The fewer women present in a field, the stronger the effect of stereotype threat pushing women out. In fact, women themselves feel the male dominance in the STEM industry, and in many cases, it scares them away from applying for jobs. Sadly, those who do apply end up confirming their concerns. Due to the high male domination, 52% of women leave tech jobs and never come back (Athena Factor Report). Combatting that vicious cycle requires providing

women role models, educating companies on the stereotype threat phenomenon, and nurturing the idea that women belong in the technology field wherever we can.

"Cliff note, the glass ceiling is actually a glass cliff. The theory is that women can expect opposition no matter what. So we might as well just decide to do the right thing as we jump in, because we're damned if we do and damned if we don't anyway. So we should just jump in." Susannah Torpey, Winston & Strawn

Women are being passed over at the top too. Only 5 percent of leadership positions in the tech sector are held by women (Fenwick & West LLP, Gender Diversity in Silicon Valley); they make up only 7 percent of partners at top 100 venture capital firms (Crunchbase, Women In Venture Report). The growth of women is also delayed: more than 20.4 percent of women over the age of 35 are still in junior positions (HackerRank). In fact, women are far more likely to be in junior positions than men - regardless of age. It will take 100 years for the C-suite to be gender equal at the current rate.

The questions asked in this report are focusing on areas that will ultimately lead to changing these statistics. If we work toward solutions, through big and small changes, we will see this trickle forward. This will lead us toward stronger businesses. In fact, according to Quantopian, Catalyst, women-led companies have historically performed three times better than those with male CEOs. This trend is true with startups, too. Dow Jones VentureSource reported that the venture-backed companies that were acquired most often, had a 7 percent share of female executives, as opposed to 3 percent at unsuccessful (unacquired) firms.



Another interesting study from IMF, Economic Gains from Gender Inclusion Study, suggests that men and women complement each other in the workplace in terms of different skills and perspectives, including varied attitudes toward risk and collaboration. As a result, increasing women's employment boosts growth and incomes more than previously estimated, exceeding the improvement that comes simply from adding workers.

### KEY SOLUTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

#### Target representations

"A goal is to get more women into first-level management, right? So only about a third of companies set targets for the representation and acceleration of women in first-level management, rather than 41% in senior management." Claire Johnson, Lendlease

#### Gender advisors on your board and senior management

One aspect to consider is for companies to have gender advisors. This is seen in the Australian Military where they have Cultural Advisors to give their perspective.

#### Continue the trend forward

"As more and more women lean in and promote upward mobility, it is crucial to keep the trend going." Celeste Johnson, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

**"Learning how to be competitive, becoming comfortable with conflict, managing gender bias, and pushing for a seat at the table are all areas where women often face challenges while rising in their careers."**

Kalpana Chandrasekhar, Biteable

## Gen Z Participants Said

“We can also promote a different kind of mindset that is more progressive and realistically aligned. Teaching young men and women about the power of women and the impacts their contribution has on society is very vital to in giving rise to a generation that is already predominantly more progressive and appreciative of the value of women.”

Mel, Kenya, IC Young Innovator

“Firstly, in order to get women appointed in leadership, we have to recognize and value their position and contribution in the society to acquire leadership positions. Secondly, capacity building through empowering them to raise their voices and express their obstacles toward full participation. Promoting women’s self-confidence. Women are often discouraged to run for disparate leadership positions because they are told and believe that leadership will be too hard for them as women. Moreover, encouraging third sectors and women’s supporting institutions, institutions and associations for women should be established and supported so as to educate them and be able to raise their voices in the top organizations of the government. Conclusively, universal education between both men and women is a weapon that can harmonize and ensure the tendency of equality, as well as equity toward women’s involvement in leadership at large.”

Anna, Ukraine, IC Young Innovator

“When employees are free to choose what works for them, that means that they will be more productive and this is the benefit for the employers.”

Sena, Turkey, IC Young Innovator



# TECHNICAL ROLES vs MANAGEMENT

“Early in my career, well before I had any technical chops, I was already being offered leadership roles in small teams or groups to lead. ‘Hey, manage this new activity,’ and I was offered these things way before I felt ready and way before I was seeing it offered to other people who I would have thought of as my peers. That doesn’t sound like a bad thing. I mean, honestly, there are generations that women before us would’ve been like, ‘Hey, finally. That’s awesome. You’re so lucky.’ That’s true for me and how my career path worked out. Then that eventually led to bigger projects and bigger teams, and to where I am now. It’s all glorious and lovely.

One of my colleagues and an official mentor, is a senior engineer who over the years I’ve watched receive management offers and turn them down. I’ve watched her be assigned to management roles and see her work to get herself unassigned to these roles. Then I’ve watched upper management push her into management roles. I’ve watched her struggle to say no against this push. She’s had to battle to stay technical in her career. I had to say no to this job. I mean, she had to fiercely hold on to being perceived as a tech. Well, not that she wasn’t perceived as technological. She was perceived as somebody who should immediately be moved up to a management role.

As much as management roles are really important, and I love mine, it has less technological depth. I’d really be interested in talking about solutions and implementable solutions about how to hold onto technical roles if that’s our career path and our career passion, and how do we tell the difference between a career opportunity and an opportunity that may be a benefit to an organization, but not necessarily to me and my career path. How do I reject those bad opportunities without closing the door on other truly good opportunities? Once you say no, it’s possible that you don’t get offered these things anymore.”

Dawn McIntosh, NASA



## #6 COVID-19 AND WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

**“The ultimate irony of all of the research on women’s leadership is that women are actually more likely to get their shot at being a boss in times of crisis, like Covid, which I found to be very interesting, and this was referred to perhaps indelicately as the glass cliff.”**

Susannah Torpey, Winston & Strawn

**“To try to look for opportunities, especially for female leadership within this crisis and while listening to this amazing group of super accomplished women tonight, it just struck me that I feel that women are really uniquely positioned to cultivate and leverage opportunities created by the Covid crisis itself.”**

Susannah Torpey, Winston & Strawn

To date, we have only held one event (virtually) during Covid. The Covid question was an addition for this forum and was led by Susannah Torpey, Winston & Strawn. Besides the timely reasons for including such a question, we also were reading many articles indicating that women were unequally being impacted in their career by the Covid crises. *In Style* reported that young women’s careers may never recover from the coronavirus crisis. In addition, *The New York Times* reported that more women than men are essential workers, causing more women worldwide to be at-risk for the virus.

One fact, though, remains at the top of everyone’s mind when speaking about women and covid: women-led countries are doing better than male-run countries. “It should come as no surprise that the women leaders throughout the world have been outperforming the male leaders in terms of how they’ve been dealing with the crisis and have been able to take bold, decisive actions to protect their people more quickly than many of the male leaders,” as researched by Susannah Torpey.

In addition, she went on to point out that “the female mayor of San Francisco, of course, acted more quickly than the male governor of California and the male mayor of LA.”

Women have scored higher in terms of solving problems in creative and flexible ways. Women are actually more likely to take decisive action supported by advice from an extended network of different viewpoints, for example, from healthcare experts in the global Covid crisis.

We have also seen that many men have had to step up in their parental roles due to Covid, and due to a variety of circumstances, numerous fathers have had to step up for the first time as the primary caretaker. Susannah spoke about video meetings with male counterparts where their kids were showing up on the screen. “While these things might have been topics for your annual review back in the day, now things are being normalized and will not be considered the sort of career ending event.”

“[As women in the workplace] many of us have been here before, both figuratively and literally. And unlike so many of our counterparts, we’ve already proven to ourselves that we’re resilient, creative and capable of adjusting to these great shocks and surprises that are coming at us now and able to come out the other end stronger and wiser because of it.”

Susannah Torpey, Winston & Strawn

With time we will continue to measure the impact.



# WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We've only just begun. This question started in San Francisco and Australia, but now we are heading further out to ask the same questions and find new answers. Ultimately, we are building a database of practical solutions that we can all try in our workplaces. As we mentioned in the beginning, this is living, breathing data. This means that a report is only a marker in time to share our current findings. We have much more to share and much more to investigate.



**“The good news that I took away from all of this research is that by participating in conferences like this, we’re already on the road to success by seeking out each other’s guidance. Jump off the glass cliff together.”**

Susannah Torpey, Winston & Strawn

## EASY TAKEAWAYS TO START TODAY

Systemic challenges to changing the pattern do not have to be difficult steps. Start with something small, something you can do today. Small steps lead us toward big changes. Here are some initial, easy-to-implement steps:

- Change your job descriptions to lead with the problem each role solves, not the technical elements
- Demand equity in candidate application pools or utilize blind recruitment techniques
- If you don't have diverse women role models or internal mentorship, utilize technology to connect your female talent pool with other groups of women
- Recognize and acknowledge without judgement, the unconscious bias in yourself and in others
- Appoint gender advisors to your leadership team and Board
- Create an open space for younger generations to voice their perspectives, for they bring a refreshing lens to the stale structures
- For men, be an ally for women. You are critical to changing this systemic cycle
- For women, find your own sense of confidence, even if you are the only woman in the room, or find a group of peers who support you personally as you navigate your career path.

# THANK YOU



Future of Women in Tech is an International Connector program in partnership with the Australian American Chamber of Commerce, San Francisco. The leadership team is:

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To our brilliant speakers:  
Thank you for your energy,  
wisdom and leadership

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\*The company listed is the company these leaders were employed by at the time of their presentation. Their affiliations have since changed.